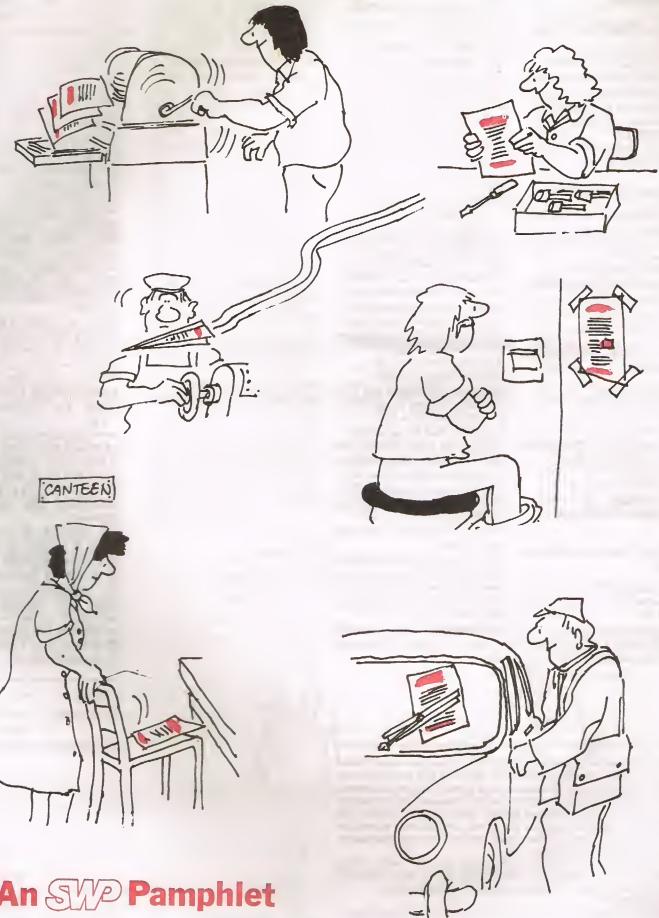


A GUIDE TO WORKPLACE BULLETINS



An SWP Pamphlet

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In the last few months the number of bulletins produced has swollen from a dribble to a steady trickle. Although the objectives and conditions vary considerably, there is a lot in common and a lot of mistakes in common. That's why the Socialist Workers Party recently organised a national school on bulletins and why this has been written. There are many quotes in the text. They were probably made at the school. Cris Fellowes transcribed much of the tape recording of the school. Without her work this manual would never have been produced.

Tom Cliff's pamphlet on *Factory Branches* was very useful. Many examples come from Manchester. This is solely due to the fact that the author has been acquainted with the experiences in Manchester.

PETE ROBINSON

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Only the working masses can change society; but they will not do that spontaneously on their own. They can rock capitalism back on its heels but they will only knock it out if they have the organisation, the socialist party, which can show the way to a new, socialist order of society. Such a party does not just emerge. It can only be built out of day-to-day struggles of working people. Many of those struggles are won or lost according to the extent of socialist organisation in the workplace. 'Sackings, cuts, wage freezes, speed-ups, discrimination against black workers against women, all these will be fought more successfully where socialists are organised.'

Socialists engage at every level in every little battle. They find immediately that the workers are not uniform. Some of them vote Tory, some even vote for the National Front, and are openly and obscenely racist. Some are committed revolutionaries. Most are none of these things. In the middle is a wide range of different ideas, often mixed up and confused, always changing and changeable, but nevertheless different.

The first job of the socialist party is to pool the resources and experience of the socialists; to give every isolated socialist the confidence to organise and argue for socialist policies among his or her workmates, neighbours and companions. Paul Foot: *Why You Should Be A Socialist* p18/19)

Part 1 About Bulletins

1.1 Why we need Bulletins

'We put in the first bulletin. The reaction from the shop floor was natter natter... have you seen this and have you seen this... I don't agree with all of it... I don't think it's right... but some of it's right you know, I don't think it should be coming here but it's right! Some of the shop stewards were saying this. And of course we had this management team marching around huffing and puffing and of course everybody was passing themselves. It was the talk of the factory.' The workplace bulletin is the voice of the Socialist Workers party inside the works. Tens of thousands read our bulletins. It would be better still if hundreds of thousands did. That is why this manual has been written. But it is not like a motorbike manual. You try assembling a motorbike without a manual. Some of the existing bulletins have been written without a manual.

Some are committed revolutionaries. Most are none of these things. In the middle is a wide range of different ideas, often mixed up and confused, always changing and changeable, but nevertheless different.

The attempt must be the attempt to win the leadership of the workers in the workplace. It is important to fight for the elected position. The back seat, 'socialist' driver does not have much influence. It is better to be seen to fight for a position, based on policies, and to lose... than to do nothing. Winning the position in itself is not enough. In fact it often poses a whole set of new problems.

socialists, the militants in the factory. In every place of work the socialists are not many. Frequently one socialist militant does not even know the others. The bulletins help bring them together. Though one finger may be weak, five fingers make a fist.

After acquiring the basic knowledge the militants around the bulletin can begin to work out a policy for the workplace which will take into account the immediate problems facing the workers. The immediate problems cannot be ignored. At the same time we will attempt to relate them to the general industrial and political problems of the SWP. Such a policy should become the guide and should be reproduced in the bulletin.

A central theme must be the attempt to win the leadership of the workers in the workplace. It is important to fight for the elected position. The back seat, 'socialist' driver does not have much influence. It is better to be seen to fight for a position, based on policies, and to lose... than to do nothing. Winning the position in itself is not enough. In fact it often poses a whole set of new problems.

NON-MEMBER:
CONFUSED, LACKING
CONFIDENCE, ISOLATED,
DEMORALISED...
INACTIVE.



NEW MEMBER:
CONFIDENT, WELL
PREPARED, ENTHUSIASTIC,
GENED UP,
ACTIVE...



Whether our members have control over the shop stewards committee, a foothold in it, or no influence at all, and whatever the short-term prospects, the principle dominating their work in the factory should be the same: to increase the participation of workers determining their activities—for mass meetings, and shop meetings to decide policy and to mandate shop stewards and delegates. Obviously we would prefer to be in a minority, getting say 100 votes among 500 workers at a meeting, to an SWP majority of 7 among 10 workers coming to a meeting.

OFTEN the most difficult thing about the bulletin is getting it started. The key is being convinced that things are wrong, in society and in the workplace—and ALSO you can do something about it. Once you have gone 9/10ths of the way, this is how one comrade started his bulletin. 'There was an occupation of

Greenwich Steel Reinforcements in London. The occupation was because six steel workers were being victimised for joining an Anti-Cuts demonstration, but the factory was also facing closure. Obviously, because they were facing closure, they could not just go on strike because British Steel Corporation would just close the plant. So they occupied and when they occupied they found

information showing that the B. S. C. were using the Economic League and the Special Branch to get information on its trade unionists. One of them was in the SWP and hadn't exactly done anything in BSC publicly. I was sitting on the bog reading the *Guardian* one morning and I thought 'Oh Christ... you can't just sit here and let a thing like that happen', so I got a story out of Socialist Worker, and then one out of the *Guardian* put them together so that all the information was together.

And that was the first step really. So I printed these things off and sent them to the steel convenors and distributed them around the factory. This gave me the confidence and there was

never any looking back from them on!

It is also true that one tenth of the problem is technical—writing the damn thing, production difficulties, and so on. If you are stuck on these things, turn straight to section 7 of the manual.

1.4 The Tip of the iceberg

BULLETINS vary in impact. Sometimes the consequences startle the authors. They cut with grains unknown.

The first example is from GEC Trafford Park. 'We had only one member working there, and he had recently started at the plant (which has 6,000 workers). The first Socialist Worker was put in because of the threat of redundancies. We advertised a factory gate meeting, a dinnertime factory gate meeting. Over 150 people came to hear Jim McCallum speak on unemployment and the Right to Work.'

The second example is from Lucas July 1977. In Summer of 1977, the toolmakers at Lucas came out on strike. This resulted in all the production workers (predominantly women) being laid off. After nine weeks, some women started to organise a 'back to work' demonstration. Womens Voice produced the first of a series of Womens Voice bulletins arguing for support for the toolmakers and lay off for women.

The bulletin was handed out at the demonstration (which was pretty heavy going) and the argument started about lay-off pay. As a result the back to work demo faded out as a campaign.

After the strike finished, negotiations were started for lay off pay and the women went on a work to rule to get it. In the end they got £50 compensation for the time laid off. That was the first time in history that Lucas has paid out to workers laid off as the result of a strike. The bulletin undoubtedly helped to shift the focus away from aggression against the toolmakers to demands on the management.

and also: 'The first bulletin in North Manchester General Hospital was produced to advertise the day of action against the Social Contract and try to strengthen links public and private sector workers. It was distributed by the 3 comrades who worked in the hospital, 2 of whom were very new. Incidentally there was an



advert on the back for the first ever SWP meeting on the hospital premises. About 20 nurses and women turned up, of the 20 people we knew only 5. The rest had never even bought SW from us, including the 3 who joined the party.'

From Sheffield: 'the reaction after we put in the first bulletin, the reaction from the shopfloor was natter, natter... have you seen this and have you seen this... I don't agree with all of it... I think it's right, it's right! Some of the shop stewards were saying this. And of course we had this management team marching around huffing and puffing and of course everybody was pissing themselves. It was the talk of the factory.'

"Then one bloke said that he knew me. He said you're the guy who used to put bulletins in, and sell papers on the gate, so I said yeah. I remarked that it was interesting that he should say that as I had probably seen him walking through so I asked him what his attitude to the bulletins. So he said that he thought that I was mad. And when I asked him what he thought about my selling papers on the gate, he still thought that I was mad. Then I asked him what was his attitude now that he was on strike. And he replied that in this case he saw every relevance and importance in it. He had seen the argument and seen why that was what it was all about. In fact he joined the SWP with a few more people.

I believe that the traditions we had built up in the factory went a long way in supporting that strike. Because they were not shy, and they called on the right to work campaign which had a mass picket outside the factory. About 150-200 people were there, and it was the biggest thing that they had ever been around this factory.

In fact they won the dispute after 5 or 6 weeks of being on strike. They then went back, there used to be a small quiet formed, very interesting thin-

to with a lot more money in their hands, and they went back very strong. They have now developed even further in the factory and there are more socialists and members in that factory.

The point I am trying to make is that it took 18 months to reach a position where there were a few people in that factory that at last related to the contents of the bulletin.

It is not overnight success. For 50 weeks of the year all the bulletin actually caused was a bit of gossip, a bit of intrigue, bit of socialism, fairly flat fairly normal, but the key to it is of course when there is a struggle, you have built you base and the arguments become very acceptable.

1.6 When to produce the Bulletins

OFTEN we hear the argument 'the time is not ripe'. So the prescription is to sit back and wait for the right moment. This can be disastrous.

Take what happened at Wilsons Brewery last summer. For a couple of months some of the shop stewards and militants had been preparing for their £15 wage claim. After 3 weeks of strike it became obvious to the militants that i) the strike had to be stepped up in order to win; by means of delegations to other breweries, blacking, lobbying joining the mass lobby of the TUC conference, proper sub committees and so on ii) that the majority of the shop stewards committee were wavering and weren't prepared to lead the strike, let alone allow others to become involved and as a result iii) the membership were wavering.

Militants were in the thick of everything trying to hold the

pieces together. As yet there had been no SW bulletins, although there was a regular sale of more than 25 papers. A crucial meeting was coming up. If there had been a tradition of SW bulletins, which had established some credibility, then it could have had a real impact in breaking down the isolation and demonstrating ways of winning. As it was the militants who didn't want a SW bulletin because i) they were very busy ii) a red scare at the meeting would have been too much to handle and iii) they didn't want to undermine the authority of the shop stewards. (They felt in a tricky position as some of them were stewards and there was an agreement that the stewards always argue the majority position at mass meetings).

Eventually it was agreed that a leaflet be written on behalf of the delegation which had just been to lobby the TUC in Blackpool. This would be submitted to the Shop Stewards committee for its blessing, and if it wasn't blessed it would be distributed regardless. It was written but as often happens, it wasn't distributed. The reason is not clear. The shop stewards gave no recommendation to the mass meeting and shop floor narrowly voted to go back. They could have won. Just a few weeks later the workers at Scottish and Newcastle Breweries won their strike for a £15 claim.

We heard the dubious argument that the crucial moment of the strike was not the time to introduce the first SWP bulletin. Even if the argument is correct it means that SWP bulletins should have been going in regularly. You can't sit back and wait till the place erupts.

1.7 Regularity

TOO often the bulletins are a blight in the pan. In order to establish a reputation, and to reform the workplace they have to be produced regularly. If they are produced less frequent than once a month they will not be remembered and it will be difficult to develop arguments. If an issue goes down like a lead balloon the thing is to adapt, respond, as soon as possible. If it is left for six weeks, you will find it difficult to even remember what was wrong with the previous piece. And if the issue does strike a chord it is important to seize the advantage.

But there is a catch. Although people may not know what is happening in other parts they are all to a greater or lesser

Part 2 What goes in them

extent know about their own area, wages, conditions, scandals and politics. *So we need to be accurate.* If necessary, pass the draft around copy around beforehand. We have no shortage of 'experts' and enemies around.

2.3 Rumours

WORKPLACES abound with rumours, c.g. especially in times of impending redundancies. In such a situation management clearly aim to keep us in the dark. It is easy to spread rumours... too easy. The bulletin has to maintain a reputation for accuracy and for being positive... therefore we generally stay clear of rumourmongering.

Some rumours can't be ignored. Rumours can be enormously demoralising—try punching your opponent in the dark.

We have to face up to these ones—by asking is it true, we demand to know the facts and by demanding the status quo until the situation is cleared up.

2.4 Need to be positive

THE Bulletin is not like a mature cheese. You can't store it in a cupboard and only fetch it when it has the right 'smell'.

2.2 The spread of information

THE factory bulletin is a mini Socialist Worker, with a much narrower audience. Most sections, departments, bays, are isolated from each other. People don't know what's going on from one shift to the other; one department to the other, one union to the other; there are fantastic divisions. So any alternative news, facts and figures will be snapped up. People love reading about themselves, their mates and things they don't know about. So we catch their interest and they will be interested.

'Our first bulletin we brought out an article called 'safety first—or is it?' which was about fire drill and fire regulation. It may have been pure co-incidence but at 11 o'clock that night the safety officer came up—and for the first time he had drawn up this document particularly for night staff and fire drills. There he was, talking about hazards. Certainly the bulletin for the credit for anything happening.

Perhaps more than any other issue, safety shows up the nature of the relationship between workers and bosses. It

stories preferably where there is a ray of hope involved. One way to create the spread of information is not to ignore the shop stewards and convenors. Even the right wingers know that I've got enough contacts on the left; they don't really like talking to me but most of them will because they know I will get the information anyway.'

One comrade at the school had this to say about the need to be positive... Because I am a shop steward, that means that I have to relate not just to my own members on the section but to what happens on the shop stewards committee. That means that the information I use and get I must use properly in a constructive way, and not in a damaging way, attacking way, in fact not in an ultra-left way. You can put bulletins that directly attack shop stewards organisations, attack management and almost attack everything, but you don't really build. Bulletins you put in must be very constructive on how you build, any criticisms you have must be lodged in a socialist argument that working people can look at and say I accept that argument.

2.5 Health and Safety

IF YOU can't think of anything to put in a bulletin you have only got to look around any workplace anywhere you like and you can pick up anything like, faulty machine guards, oil 'slicks' on the floor. And so on. So I don't see any difficulty in getting things to write about.

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shows what their priorities are and what our priorities are. With just one issue the socialist in the workplace can prove that they are the people who really care about human beings whereas the boss, the bosses men and the so called moderates care about things, profits, production, and overtime.

Safety enables you to highlight the double standards — the money that's spent on glossy company cars and expense accounts and the provisions made for the easy jobs like managers compared to the hazardous occupation of being a worker. Every workplace is dangerous to a greater or lesser degree. Every workplace is a rich source of stories and agitational levers. Start with the lavatory paper — what do the directors use. Is it soft while the workers is hard. And don't be discouraged if you're an office worker. What are your ceilings made of — asbestos. What about the hazards of photocopiers, infrared cooking madness, stairways

and lifts, badly designed chairs and desks, inadequate ventilation.

The safety issue also can be issue to fight on when you're weak or when you've just taken a beating on something else. It's a clear simple issue about which people feel very strongly and think they have 'right' on their side. Above all it can be the issue which really changes peoples' consciousness. They begin to stop looking on themselves as things in the service of the Almighty boss but as people with needs and rights and desires, which must be met. The book 'Hazards of Work' is a great inspiration.

The new health and safety regulations makes the problem much more acute. Now the responsibility is placed upon the shoulders of the workforce. Now management can disclaim liability if there have been no complaints.

2.6 Humour

BULLETINS have become



enormously popular with the rank and file, because not only do they stand up against management and trade union officials, but we also take the piss out of them. The audacity (boldness?) of the bulletins strikes a responsive chord. Factory life is a drudge. A humourous item can be taken up like a good joke, and repeated time and time again. Sometimes it is the only way we can make a point.

Take the following extract from Chrysler bulletin 25.5.74

He speaks with forked tongue

'We are pleased to announce that the April winner of the "Art Hawkins Broken Promise of the Month" trophy is the vehicle assembly production manager, Art Hawkins. This is the 93rd time in succession that Mr. Hawkins has won the award, and sets a new record.'

'Art won the award on the strength of his all round activities. His performance was described by one eye witness as "As fine a display of deception, though I can't say he's got cards."

(For English readers, a 'Piece' is the staple diet in Scotland)

Cartoons, are, too enormous-

treachery and double dealing that it's ever been by my privilege to witness.'

'The holder keeps the trophy, a bronze effigy of a man laughing up his sleeve, for one month. By the time you read this the presentation ceremony will have taken place, as Mr. Hawkins has promised to return the trophy by Thursday the 23rd of May. LATE NEWS FLASH: The presentation ceremony has had to be postponed as the trophy has not yet been returned.'

Another theme comes from the Varrow bulletin

'Last week we carried a cartoon of Oberleutnants Smith and Axup. They threatened to put the whole Camp on bread and water for a week if we didn't stop spreading these vicious and unfounded rumours about them.'

Runnily enough, more of these rumours keep coming from the prisoners huts. In the last few weeks six hostages — sorry! workers — each week have faced that most personal of treatment — at the hands of Oberstabsfelder Chalmers, officer in charge of prisoners welfare and Red Cross parcels. He explained that he would have listened to the prisoners explanations, but someone had turned down his hearing aid — probably another prisoner — so that he couldn't hear the arguments. He promised to get a new battery before the next round of whippings.

It's time we formed an underground resistance. Join the SWP; write for this Camp Bulletin; tell us your atrocious stories; share your escape plans. Remember — we're all prisoners here.

ly popular, especially our Norman' cartoons. *And Now follows a Party Political Broadcast for Phil Evans Cartoons.*

'I use the Evans cartoons all the time. I just find them terrific. Everywhere I look through I can normally find one that is particularly relevant and then when the issues change I find a whole number of others that I can use. If necessary I change the wording on the cartoons to suit the issue.'

clock before I drive down from Scotland.

6. If there are redundancies, Mr. Wilson said he would see me alright.

7. Mr. Wilson has reduced hours worked for the skilled men over 65 who stay on for a short while?

8. I knew nothing of your problem over loss of wages on Christmas Eve. Happy Christmas.

9. Who me? Violent? You must mean another Taffy Jenkins!

10. This scurilous rag is produced by outsiders, by people who don't even work here.

THEREFORE we call upon the shop stewards committee to condemn the management's racism policy.'

This sloppiness, lack of perspective is reflected by what's written in the bulletins. For example, there was a strike at Boddington's Brewery, just down the road, the first in their 200 year history. There was no bulletin calling for financial support... even though there was a substantial sum left over in the Wilsons strike fund.¹⁰ And similarly there was no publicity about the dramatic picket almost next door, staged by the oil rig electricians employed by

shortly before a stewards meeting or mass meeting, finishing off the relevant article with "...get on to your steward and argue with him to raise this issue, or "...vote for this at the meeting..."

A study by the industrial department shows that:

'A total of 64 per cent of the subject matter analysed dealt with what can be described as workplace-specific material (wages, safety, gossip, union elections, shop stewards), but the sample sent in only included a handful of bulletins where we were clearly arguing a course of action to be followed. Most of this material was largely

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING CHIPS....



2.7 Sharpening our demands

Mather and Platt's.

So what I have been really worried about is the lack of perspective in terms of immediate agitation... and also I think we should try to spell out how we are trying to build an SWP branch in the Brewery.

Who said?

1. Wealth cannot be distributed until it has been created. This year everybody gets a new Rover.
2. As the most popular man on the site I negotiated the trimmers bonus, and as I am still the most popular man on the site, I don't care how many bonus points they get, I am not paying it.
3. I got a very good price for my Mother.
4. I am going to get the union out of here if it is the last thing I do.
5. I hope nobody nicks my

propagandist. We clearly need to discuss how we sharpen the bite of our bulletins on workplace matters.'

When it comes to the workplaces we basically have to make less general noises and make one or two more piercing notes. What the issue is depends upon the workplace. No issue is too small. Demands have to be made. Demands have to be seen to be won or lost. That can't be done well 100's of demands. Continually we should refer back to previous bulletins and say in issue number 187 we said that... and the reason that we are now in this situation is because of what happened...¹¹

Refer to *Fighting for the leadership of the workplace (1.1) Criticising the Shop Stewards (3.4) Need to be positive (2.4)*

2.8 Outside issues.

NO FACTORY is an island (of socialism in a sea of capitalism). Events in the outside world affect us all. It is no accident that racist jokes and attacks increased at work immediately after Margaret Thatcher's recent racist outburst. We have to break with small time attitudes which say . . . it's got nothing to do with us . . . don't bring politics into it. We have to create a debate inside the plant.

A report from the industrial department shows that:—The political coverage in the bulletins leaves a lot to be desired. A total of 15 per cent coverage (Nazis, Gay, Abortion) means that a high proportion of bulletins contained no political generalisation at all. This is as true of SWP and WV bulletins as it is for the R&F bulletins. It also means that we are not really carrying the political issues of the day (Thatcher - More - Zaire - The Budget - Wolverhampton - Palestine - May Day etc etc) into the workplaces on the basis of our credibility on workplace matters. By far the biggest issue raised at all is the Nazis, it has been raised since the success of the Anti Nazi League and especially the Carnival.

Before it was much more difficult. If you look at the bulletins that were written, eg after Lewisham there were very few where the SWP argued why Lewisham was necessary and right. It is only when we started getting some more 'acceptable' successes that we started arguing the thing. I believe if at the beginning, the centre and comrades in the localities, had taken up the arguments, the benefits we would have reaped would have been much more . . . we would have reaped many more benefits. In the long term the base and the credibility around the party would have been much stronger. Apart from the Nazis there is only one bulletin that even mentions Thatcher's stand on immigration. Again then, we should have really gone in with lead boots on, and brought it out into the open. In most cases we would have come across considerable opposition. In the majority of cases the answer to the Question Why are not more people coming around us has much more to do with the fact that we are not raising the political issues of the day. The Mori can is a good example.

One way of raising outside issues is by trying to through the eyes of the workplace. There is

no reason why Massey Ferguson workers can't raise, discuss the world market and crises . . . the divisions and attitude of bosses to workers in Spain and Argentina . . . by taking up the company's explanation why it is broke. Busworkers can raise socialist and workers control . . . by discussing how busmen would run their own industry . . . and how free transport costs society much less.

A comrade from Yarrow shipyards has this to say:
'In some small way we try to link outside politics to things that are happening at Yarrows, eg they are building these boats for the Shah of Iran so then we wrote something about the type of set up in Iran. We took the concept of Transport and argued how there should be free transport and went through the whole argument of how we can link up. We said just ask yourself the next time you see all the private bus companies lined up outside Yarrows, you know that they are not doing you any favours. It is because it is so damned expensive to get a corporation bus but the answer is not a private network but free buses.'

Things like building warships came up during the by-election campaign. We had a peace loving CND chairman of one of the shipyards arguing we shouldn't be doing this, building warships, instead we should be building different types of ships. Really what that means is a place like Yarrows is getting shot of it—because I don't know of any other market for boats like big ships that we started arguing the thing. I believe if at the beginning, the centre and comrades in the localities, had taken up the arguments, the benefits we would have reaped would have been much more . . . we would have reaped many more benefits. In the long term the base and the credibility around the party would have been much stronger. Apart from the Nazis there is only one bulletin that even mentions Thatcher's stand on immigration. Again then, we should have really gone in with lead boots on, and brought it out into the open. In most cases we would have come across considerable opposition.

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Part 3 Specific points

3.1 Bulletins in small workplaces

QUESTION: The first question that was raised at the recent school on workplace bulletins was: How many people do there have to be in a workplace before you put a bulletin in? Like in my own situation it is quicker to whip around and see everybody and tell them what you want to!

ANSWER: 'We put in an ANI bulletin, into my school, where there are about 70 teachers, but we're in two separate buildings. The reasons why it is worth doing that, was that I found you didn't really need round 30 people and have a very detailed conversation. Even you may have the arguments there, if you're sort of lost, whereas at least a bulletin is something concrete that they can take away and read later.'

'There is a case for putting a bulletin into a small workplace, and in places where it may be difficult there are lots of ways in which you can distribute, leaving it in the toilets perhaps.'

the context of one garage, I then had to start thinking about how many garages there were around, that we could begin to pull together on the questions of bulletins. If it draws you outward in that sense then it has got to be good.'

3.2 How the Shop Stewards react to bulletins.

PERHAPS the bulletin won't build a SWP factory branch overnight. But more often than not it will cause ripples of consternation in the shop stewards committee and amongst the local union branch officials. Shop stewards committees are not necessarily the most democratic bodies in the world. Sometimes they think they are above the gods. They don't want their tactics to get out . . . and often they mask their manoeuvres or it may just be lack of confidence, in the name of hiding their position from management. The stewards may well feel threatened . . . somebody . . . could it be reds, our outside agitators . . . is writing about the things that they know about, or should know about. Somebody is saying that things could be better.

Since most bulletins will be written from a weak position in the beginning ones to make sure that they are given an opportunity to isolate you. The importance of accuracy cannot be overstressed. (Refer to section 'The spread of information').

'This is what a shop steward friend of mine had to say: 'I had just been elected shop steward and then got into tremendous arguments. One of the arguments was that whoever is putting these bulletins in, no name mentioned, is breaking the discipline of the shop stewards committee, and they are going against the decisions taken . . . this sort of argument went on and on for three consecutive meetings and three consecutive bulletins. I was attacked for this. This is how I argued back and was written up in this bulletin . . .'

'Now we have developed the idea in the factory that bulletins are acceptable, because although a number of the leaders of shop stewards don't like the idea that there is a renegade structure in the factory, that the minute they do something that isn't in the interest of the workers it will go in the bulletin. They have had to accept that people have a right to put bulletins in. People have a right to put information to the work force, they have a right to involve themselves in a criticism of the structures that exist and the things that arc

particularly acute upon any shop steward who is supposed to have collaborated on the bulletin.'

3.3 How to argue back.

BECAUSE of the strength of the shop stewards committee, and the particular traditions built up it may be difficult for comrades to hold keep their position on the committee and, also, establish a tradition of independence.

'They tried to expel me from the works committee because we were giving information which was secret which hadn't been given out at a mass meeting. You have to be very careful. Now I am very careful and always write in the third person. I always make the point that it is more than me in this particular yard.'

'The defence was that, as far as the SWP stewards were concerned, we give reports back to our members all the time at all times and during all stages of negotiations. This is the thing that can help to keep our name clear because we say, well look, nothing in that bulletin hasn't been said in sectional meetings. As far as SWP is concerned I am not the only member in this factory. There are other members writing in this bulletin. I am not only doing my job as a steward—not breaking discipline or divulging secrets.'

This is what a shop steward friend of mine had to say: 'I had just been elected shop steward and then got into tremendous arguments. One of the arguments was that whoever is putting these bulletins in, no name mentioned, is breaking the discipline of the shop stewards committee, and they are going against the decisions taken . . . this sort of argument went on and on for three consecutive meetings and three consecutive bulletins. I was attacked for this. This is how I argued back and was written up in this bulletin . . .'

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going on in the factory. And in fact some comrades have been victimised for the same thing. It is important that the argument is had and won.'

'You can't have enough information for working people to read and to look at and to discuss and to argue.'

'Certainly shop stewards and branch committee newsletters are to be welcomed, and fought for. But two overlapping problems arise. The first is that our comrades sink their energies into producing the more "official" newsletter rather than the independent SWP bulletin. They choose the soft option. The argument mirrors that of the SWP or R&F bulletin and is taken up later. The second problem is

that the 'existing bulletin' ie the advocates, who are probably the existing bulletin experts, get roped into producing them. And the SWP bulletin gets lost somehow. The convenor of Metal Box is a member, where we used to put in a SW bulletin, but the SW bulletin has now become the shop stewards bulletin.' In theory both should be produced . . . but for our comrades the priority is the SWP bulletin.

We operate as Socialist militants and not as super militant shop stewards. That means we have to see our workplace in the context of Society and the party, and through the eyes of the stewards committees.

SWP bulletins do not appear automatically when the struggle picks up. We said earlier that during the strike at the Manchester Brewery that 'militants' were in the thick of everything trying to hold the pieces together. The firemen's strike, and the Anti Nazi league were splendid issues to be taken up in Bulletins. The problem, in Manchester was not that the issues were missed out, but that bulletins didn't appear. This explanation is that our militants, and the party, were sucked in by organisational needs of the Firemen's strike and the ANL.

3.4 Confronting the Stewards

SOMETIMES we have to directly confront the factory leadership. Take for example, the December issue of the Rank and File Celanese Bulletin:

SHOP STEWARDS ELECTIONS — Throw Them Out

Even then the bulletin does not slag individuals. Instead it argues:

We want stewards who:

- Go to every meeting.
- Keep us informed about everything that is happening on site.
- Fight hard at every opportunity to improve our pay and conditions.

That is what an ANL member of the Firemen's strike had to say: 'I

'had just been elected shop steward and then got into tremendous arguments. One of the arguments was that whoever is putting these bulletins in, no name mentioned, is breaking the discipline of the shop stewards committee, and they are going against the decisions taken . . . this sort of argument went on and on for three consecutive meetings and three consecutive bulletins. I was attacked for this. This is how I argued back and was written up in this bulletin . . .'

'Now we have developed the idea in the factory that bulletins are acceptable, because although a number of the leaders of shop stewards don't like the idea that there is a renegade structure in the factory, that the minute they do something that isn't in the interest of the workers it will go in the bulletin. They have had to accept that people have a right to put bulletins in. People have a right to put information to the work force, they have a right to involve themselves in a criticism of the structures that exist and the things that arc

EVEN where we are well established, and where the bulletins have gone in for years, the comrades take care and the main distribution is done at the gates by comrades from the outside.

Many workplaces have rules against the distribution of literature inside the workplace. If we are not strong enough to ignore them, there are always ways and means around the rules. Cars have been seen coming down the assembly lines with bulletins in them—the bogs are an easy place to leave them lying around.

Management at Bassatts put up a notice saying that under hygiene laws no contaminated matter must be put forward into the factory. This is how the next bulletin replied:

'Don't take foolish risks. Try and involve others in the distribution of a bulletin. It is better that ten people dump hatches throughout the works than just one. Even if the one is a better distributor, it may be best for the reputed author, 'the Red', not to be seen distributing while his or her mates dash the things out. Collecting money to

pay for them is also a means of strengthening the safety net.

Quite clearly our comrades have to choose the best way of working in each case, taking care both not to expose themselves unnecessarily, but

also without being so secretive that their existence becomes a closely guarded secret that they reduce themselves to total ineffectiveness.

(Ref to *What to do when victimised*) (4.7)

Part 4 Avoiding victimisation

VICTIMISATION is a hazard of work. Like many hazards a lot can be done to minimise it. It is true that bulletins can help lead to victimisation. Before all faint-hearted cry 'Right, that's it! I am not losing my job for no one!' let us point out that it is very rare for a bulletin to lead to a loss of the job... and usually it is because of silly mistakes.

4.1 Using our names

SOMETIMES the name and/or address of one of the comrades who work in this factory is given as a contact address - this has to be avoided at all costs. One had a case of a comrade putting his name to an article on the first bulletin issued in a small Sheffield engineering sweatshop. The reason I put my name on the bulletin, although it seems a ludicrous thing to do, was that as far as I could see it was a case of doing something or getting out. I was quite happy to get out. *Certainly I would agree that you have to be very careful before you put your name to the bulletin.*" He was sacked three days later.

4.2 Roll your own

'ABOUT four years ago when I was working in Manchester, I was the convenor of a small factory in Trafford Park. The work force was about 120.'

We had a right wing district official come down from the AUEW and a few other guys from the foundry workers etc and put a deal over us about wages.

I was not happy with it, but wasn't strong enough to con-

vince the stewards' committee (which consisted of two other blokes) that it was wrong. So it resulted in my producing a bulletin, to get at the lads that had been conned basically. The upshot of that was that I was called up to the office about a fortnight later.

The bulletin had been produced not on a duplicator, like most of us do now, but I had a contact in the office, one of the secretaries who did it for me on a Rank Xerox, which cost about five pence a sheet, and there must have been about £50 worth.

They had us up in the office and said,

'Right Mr Robertson, were you responsible for the production of this document?'

And I said,

'Yes, I was responsible for the production of that document. What's wrong with that sort of thing?'

'Well, there's nothing wrong with it, if you want to go around putting out this sort of rubbish, well, that's up to you. But we do object to having our machines used to do it. Now did you in fact use the machine?'

Now, because I wanted to protect this girl who was not a member of our organisation I said:

'No!'

And they left it at that. The following day, they had me up in the office again, one day, asked me the same questions, and then produced a report from the Rank Xerox Engineers, whom they had called in that morning. They had got hold of the drum that is inside the machine, which records every single document that is produced on the machine and they said,

'We have a written statement

from these people here, that it was produced here, we have got a record of it, what are you going to do about it?'

And I said, 'Well, it's not what I'm going to do about it, what are you going to do about it?'

And they said, 'Well, we're going to sack you.'

And they DID.
This comrade was reinstated following a strike.

4.3 Personal insults

ABOUT the same time we had a case at Intex textiles, part of ICL. For some time our comrades had been a thorn in the common flesh of management and union.

The comrades made a mistake in bulletin No 9. They were having a go at a particularly reactionary shop floor woman worker... They called her fatatty ...

The adjective was unnecessary, and many women, who may not have supported her otherwise, criticised the bulletin.

The union, the notorious Dyers and Bleachers, then suspended the alleged offenders for acting against the interests of the union and the following day a comrade was sacked. (A strike took place... the first in memory where a large number of Asian workers came out in support of a white militant... while a large number of the whites scabbed).

The point is that we have to be very careful about attacks upon fellow shop floor workers and trade unionists. Personal allusions like fatty should be avoided. Even the word 'bloody' can suddenly become offensive. Criticisms of fellow workers should never be personal—and should attempt

to be constructive.

4.4 Self Praise

JUST as we try not to have a go at individual stewards we also have to be careful about extolling our own virtues. We have already referred to a bulletin distributed in a Sheffield sweatshop. The shop steward never did anything, in fact he was usually in the other factory three miles away. 'We didn't slag him in the bulletin even though he was rubbish. Instead the bulletin said VOTE FOR ME.' The danger of self advertisement in the bulletin is that it allows the argument 'Ah, he is only doing it for his own benefit... or it is a personal thing'. In this particular case the established steward broke alkown shop stewards' 'reaction' records... he rushed to the union official and the election was delayed. Three days later 'ME' was sacked.

4.5 Beware of the Rule Book

'MY BIGGEST mistake was to underestimate the union, and in particular, a ridiculous rule in the GMWU rulebook. The rule in question is rule 43 and part of it reads: "The executive council and the regional committee shall have the power to suspend from benefits or compel from membership or prohibit from holding any branch office any member who is guilty of attempting to injure the union or act in contravention to the rules or who makes or in any way associates himself or herself with any defamatory scurrilous or abusive attacks whether in any journal, magazine or pamphlet, or word of mouth."

Most unions have rules like this. Whether they are enforced depends upon the particular circumstances. No bulletins would ever be issued if the rule were listened to. But the rules do mean we have to take especial consideration.

4.6 Management Union collusion

THE combination of management and union in collusion can be most dangerous. In many cases the collusion is indirect. As in the example above... the union softens and weakens the victim... and then management come in with the sacking..

The union may even attempt to defend the victim... after it has done the damage.

Sometimes the collusion is

more obvious. Take this case from the M/C fireservice.

We did local bulletins and these were pushed through by the union or station reps. But however the whole lot were confiscated. So we tried to send them out by other means. Now, every bit of literature that comes to the station that is not official Fire Brigade literature, is taken upstairs and opened in the office. All the rest of the stuff is described as subversive literature. During the strike the Rank and File National Bulletin went down really well. But now we are in a situation where we are at a standstill.

The collusion of management and union can be a most serious disease. A disease which breaks out sporadically and we are often blind to the signs of it. Several years ago the management at Halsteads, in Whitefield, sacked two comrades on the spot. Several hours before the sacking the management had been seen the union offices just down the road. (The Rubber and Plastics and Allied Workers Union - now incorporated in the GMWU). A strike was held and the comrades were fully reinstated.

way to fight victimisations warrants its own manual. All we can do is try to list a number of suggestions - dos and don'ts.

- Attempt to stay on at the workplace... don't be escorted off the premises
- Refuse to accept your cards
- Refuse to see management/personnel alone
- Attempt to get your section to strike immediately
- Get those on strike to picket others at the gate
- Contact the convenor and all stewards as soon as possible
- Use the official machinery
- Issue a bulletin/leaflet or letter with the facts of the case
- Refer to precedents
- Don't duck any red scares
- Don't wait for any industrial tribunals
- Contact the SWP at once, especially other militants in similar industry and the organisers.
- Don't give up!

One of the biggest mistakes is that comrades are slow to respond... and they give up too easily. Often the blow comes from a totally unexpected direction, eg, 'faulty workmanship',

is sacking them just before they are about to go on their holidays... so if they stay and fight they miss their holiday with the family. Comrades can be embarrassed into passivity because they made a stupid mistake. All the pressures are to move like a tortoise and retreat. Always one has to fight back immediately... while the issue is still hot. Once forgotten or once your section has made the decision to 'wave' it is extremely hard to step up the struggle again. The play by the party has been crucial in the past. And of course, bulletins can help.

4.8 Rules of the thumb

THE best way of avoiding victimisation is making sure that management give you little opportunity... and that you have done your homework in the workplace.

The rules of thumb, printed in the factory branches pamphlet still apply. A few rules of thumb are perhaps useful.

a) The rule that revolutionaries should always be the best workers is quite right. It is

return late from the sportsfield or the nearby pub. Pilfering is a normal feature of factory life. All these things are well known to management, their ability to do something about it depends on their analysis of the cost involved in attempting to control it. In most cases they will decide that it is not worth taking risks, and they will make allowances for all these things in their accounting. But no trouble might be too much to get rid of a powerful militant. Then the various 'instant dismissal' clauses, which are never used, are all of a sudden brought into operation. No member is SWP should push himself or herself into such a position.

b) Losing one's temper to supervisors is an excellent way to keep them in their place. But again, care must be taken not to place oneself out on a limb.

c) Secrecy may at times be necessary. At one rule however one should attempt to operate as openly as possible. The greater the formality, the less is the possible suspicion on the part of their workmates, that we have not been honest. The 'reds under the bed' scare can be devastatingly effective if one has kept one's politics carefully hidden. The best defence is honesty, and being able to say it was all above board. In the last analysis the best defence is the support one gets from one's mates. This will not be forthcoming if they can be convinced that they have been taken for a ride.

d) Positions in the official movement strengthens our hand against victimisation, especially in case the unions decide to give the employers a helping hand. Thus while the shop floor organisation is the most important one, our comrades must take positions in the union. Even a place on a branch committee might be of help. Being branch secretary, chairman, or on the district is of course even better. Being a delegate to the Trades Council may be of use. There is to all these positions a treble importance. It is important for our work in the unions. It may discourage the employers and union bureaucracy from moving against us. Lastly in case of victimisation these positions will be invaluable in organising support against it.

e) One last point. It is always important to maintain relations of some friendliness with left communists in the work environment or in the union structure. They aid us well in the general fight for which we need to defend our members in any given situation.



4.7 What to do when victimised

BULLETINS do not necessarily lead to victimisation. In Glasgow nobody in recent history has been victimised because of bulletins. It is years in M/C since management used the excuse of bulletins to give 'theft', 'swearing at the foreman'.

Not only is the subject caught unaware but the fellow workers may be bemused by the allegations. Their bewilderment can be interpreted by the victim as 'being run down by my mates'. This is a very common tactic. Many victimisations may lead to the victim becoming demoralised and prone to packing it. One of management's favourite tricks

important first of all because no member of the SWP must appear a skiver to his or her workmates, but it is also important since the management will be looking for opportunities to victimise a dangerous employee. In most work places how to get rid of difficult workers is normally considered. Workforce clock out either in and off take turns to absent themselves from work, play cards in work time,

Part 5

What type of Bulletin

5.1 Rank and File or SWP Bulletins

THE MOST contentious discussion at the school on workplace bulletins was the argument whether we put in R&F or SWP bulletins. Obviously we are in favour of both and there is still a problem.

Jack Robertson, from the Industrial Department, introduced the discussion. 'Of the bulletins that are in front of me on this table, there are 26 SW bulletins, 23 R&F bulletins and six Womens Voice bulletins. In the vast majority of cases there is no reason whatsoever why the R&F bulletins are not SW AND Womens Voice bulletins. Presumably some people saw them as an introduction.'

It is easier to produce a rank and file heading than the SWP one.

The problems that it brings you into eventually are very serious. Particularly in this period where the chances of people going over the barricades in support of the big wage claim are not very likely. Then to be producing a rank and file bulletin which solely says what we have to do is together, unite and fight, actually is not good enough.

It doesn't say very much after a while. An example is the rank and file pamphlet about the closure at Thorns.

The pamphlet is really very good but the interesting thing about it is two lines hidden away page 8. The pamphlet makes the point why it is that a colour TV factory is being closed down when there are hospitals throughout the country where they could do with a colour TV for the patients. This caused more of a discussion inside the factory than all the other 12 pages put together.

When we are talking about building the party, building a periphery, around us we are not talking about trying to conquer 100% of the workforce of our politics. Obviously, the bulletins are sometimes aimed to influence the mass meeting, whatever, to vote for what you are arguing for. But in terms of building a periphery around us what we are talking about is increasing our small minority

slightly. The rank and file bulletin does tend to skip that. Although it may go down quite well and no doubt comrades will give examples of rank and file bulletins which have worked excellently.

In the long run you do run into problems.

How, for example, after producing 12 issues of a rank and file bulletin you suddenly want to raise some political issue which is particularly important in that period of time and which the SWP has a different idea from everybody else. You cannot expect, all of a sudden, to put that into a rank and file bulletin and think that nobody is going to think any differently about it. In 90% of cases I would argue the necessity to make the bulletins SWP ones. It does put you in a position of being, perhaps, isolated for a period. But in the long run it does leave the door open for you to tackle any political issue that comes up at all.

5.2 Isolation - and Rank and File

WE HEARD this argument from a NALGO worker. If the comrades started putting out SW bulletins at this stage they would alienate the SWP from the rest of the people in the NALGO action group, and would make their job much harder. And the NALGO action group would be discredited as an SWP front.

And from a M/C teacher: 'in the last year we have had a reasonable amount of success, and now we have the best rank and file presence ever in Manchester NUT. This success was due to the rank and file group, which has many non SWP comrades. At this stage this is all we can expect from within the NUT. There is a possibility of alienating a fairly sizeable periphery by putting out a SWP bulletin as opposed to a rank and file one. At a recent meeting we have a vote on maternity benefits, due to such as Margaret Thatcher on immigration controls etc.'

'There is a problem. We have a comrade who will be running as district secretary in the AUEW very shortly. We will be running him on an Engineers Charter Platform. But we are arguing with him now, because that election is coming up in a year's time that he should restart the SWP bulletins in the Wirral injunction, where women have won equal pay, gained good maternity leave agreements etc. Such bulletins should also take on board general political arguments such as Margaret Thatcher on immigration controls etc.'

'I've got a nasty feeling that if we had put it out as a SWP resolution we may have received a political attack which we

didn't want. Obviously we have got to take these attacks as they come, but there is the angle that we are building up some kind of opposition to the bureaucrats who run the union and have done so for 100 years.'

And from another teacher: 'You can put in a bulletin usefully at most individual schools... We have a whole number of scattered workplaces and we depend on a whole network of contacts, some good and some not so good. They will by large take rank and file literature, push them in their own schools and argue the policies a little bit but they are miles away from SWP. If we were to put out an SWP bulletin, in real terms it would only be distributed in three or four schools. So the key thing is we have to look at our own situation... assess what is needed and what can be done.'

A hospital worker writes: 'Many hospital workers feel isolated both inside their own department, and in other departments. This isolation becomes the reason for not doing a bulletin. Or they do a rank and file bulletin instead of a SWP one. The point is that a bulletin is the best way of overcoming that isolation.'

1. If the SWP pulled out of doing the Rank and File bulletin would it exist?
2. If you were not doing a rank and file bulletin could you do a SWP one?

5.4 Womens Voice bulletins

WOMENS VOICE bulletins are political bulletins which should be produced with a predominantly female workforce to argue about issues at work, specific demands in relation to women and general policies from a Womens Voice stand point, ie arguments about wages and the right to work have to be presented specifically for women - why women are entitled as of right to work, and should be demanding high wages. There should also be a regular column about what is happening to women in news stories about abortion as at the Wirral injunction, where women have won equal pay, gained good maternity leave agreements etc. Such bulletins should also take on board general political arguments such as Margaret Thatcher on immigration controls etc.'

Womens Voice bulletins have been successful in a whole

combine bulletins. We don't think that the two or three are complementary. They are supplementary (my dear Watson).

'Imagine there are quite a few bulletins called rank and file where there are no rank and file groupings. Whenever there is a dispute in steel the officials always come and say get back to work. So there is a fantastic need for a rank and file group as such in steel. There is also a need to talk about the things that are facing steel workers. That is a need, small as we are, we can respond to. People have said that they are put off about our real need to do, because it is a really rank and file paper, even though you put SW on it. It is in the sense that it is doing a job that is necessary, but it isn't a rank and file paper. It is a couple of SWP members getting together, and we are doing that because there is a need and we are proud that we are socialists and we can see that need and we are not going to run away from being in SWP. And it is wrong to say that we won't get as much stick if we don't put SW on it. I fully support rank and file bulletins if there is a rank and file grouping. If you haven't got that you can use rank and file as a bit of a cop out'.

TWO QUESTIONS . . .

1. If the SWP pulled out of doing the Rank and File bulletin would it exist?
2. If you were not doing a rank and file bulletin could you do a SWP one?

number of instances. For example at Castle Bromwich, a Leyland plant, a Womens Voice bulletin was started as the result of the victimisation of a woman worker in the press shop. The effect of the bulletins was spreading the story of the victimisation round the plant, exposing the role of the GMWU conveyor and the shop steward both in the press shop in taking on the woman steward and in the plant as a whole in taking on the convenor. Neither has been deposed yet. The bulletins (two so far) have also led to big sales of Womens Voice over 50 on the gates each time.'

The revolution is not going to be made by men only. The most oppressed and the most exploited have a vital part to play. The SWP is predominantly a male party. There are very few working class women in the party. We have to consciously develop this aspect of our work. The problems expressed by the comrade at Bassatts is by no means unique.

'87% of Bassatts workforce are women. Of the three bulletins we have put in we haven't done anything particularly around women—just general issues that affect all of us. I find it hard to get in contact with women. Besides, I am on nights. I talk to our stewards about different issues we could bring up on the shop stewards committee. Like anything else it is a male dominated committee. Equality of work, equality of pay, these kind of issues never get raised I have raised similar issues as chairman of the shop stewards' committee but they just fall flat. Things like creche facilities at work, hairdresser at work, because they are on shifts, are important and things we could be going into.'

'But if the women don't take it up themselves it is not going to get seen to. I would like to carry on the SWP bulletin, putting in articles written by and about women. But the bulletin is not particularly appealing to women, so I would also like to have a separate WV bulletin going in. I would dig deeper. We are going to have to have a separate leaflet for this rally which is coming up. I can give some help but a WV bulletin is going to have to be done from the outside by the WV group... which is the only way we can do it at present.'

There will be very heated arguments with the bitches about things you say on bulletins. It's not going to be the last. That's what you want the bulletin for. If you get involved in arguments with people, that's when you get your politics across. You don't get your politics across. We are going to have to sell the bulletins when the guys are reading it. You want it when a lad comes up to you waving his fist shouting "what's this? What the hell is this?" and you turn to him and say "what's you problem, mate?" Let's sit down and discuss it'. We use bulletins to evoke arguments and put over our politics.'

5.5 Advertising Politics.

THERE IS an argument that there is no need for the SWP bulletin.

In one case we hear 'the comrade says he sells the charter, he writes the shop stewards bulletins and he writes the combine bulletin'. In another case we hear the Rank and File bulletins can print anything we want it to. HOWEVER arguing general politics is not enough. The SWP believes that the revolutionary party is a consequence of a general political understanding. Activity and organisation are an integral part of 'political understanding'. This distinguishes us from many other 'lefties'. Many of the SW bulletins seem to be shying of the fact. That may be why only a few of the bulletins have SOCIALIST WORKER written into the heading; and on others you have to hunt for the fact that SWP has anything at all to do with it. It would not be too difficult to print a standard advert on the bottom of all our bulletins.'

At Chrysler Linwood the comrades have been putting in bulletins for the last nine years. They now have the biggest factory branch in the party. So we will let them have a word: Obviously amongst the 9,000 who come into the factory there are people who will buy Socialist Worker... but how can you get to them, that's the point. We talk to some but we cannot talk to all, so that is where the bulletin comes in. By putting your bulletin in you can identify yourself with SW and then the workers know that there is an organisation within the factory and once they know that there is maybe they will seek you out. It helps build the paper sale.'

Our politics are always on the bulletin, we never hide them and we never hide behind a leaflet that is called 'Chrysler Bulletin'. We also give an address at the bottom when the leaflet is produced. We will advertise all our meetings on the bulletin.'

Remember that a bulletin needs to be frequently issued in order to agitate.

Try agitating slowly! The following jobs have to be done:
1. Collecting stories and information
2. Writing them up
3. Re-checking them
4. Typing and production
5. Distribution, probably at the factory gates
6. Selling at the gates
7. Sell SW inside
8. Collecting payments for the bulletin
9. Establishing a discussion group
10. Fighting for the 101 things we expressed in the bulletin.

That means there will be an immense load on the comrades inside. They can single handedly produce a few issues of the bulletin, but they will die of a mixture of exhaustion especially brought upon by a lack of direction. Assuming there are two comrades inside the workplace they should have at least one other person (not the organiser) to work closely and constantly with. And in addition they will probably need another 2 or 3 people to help distribute at the gates, sell papers, and so on. If the bulletins and the schedule is established properly things will be done without much effort... it will become part of the everyday activity of the party.

Take the example of Thorns in Enfield. 'At Thorns we need 6 people at 7 o'clock in the morning to hand out leaflets and another 6 at lunchtime for the afternoon shift and another couple to catch the twilight shift and night shift. In the last 14 months we have put out 16 issues of the bulletin. Within the life of the branch we attempt to regularly discuss what's going on in Thorns. Unless the comrades feel it is worth it, they just wouldn't do it. If we don't attempt to involve them they would just feel as if they are being used as cannon fodder.'

6.2 Selling Socialist Worker

BULLETINS do help the Socialist Worker sales. At one workplace in North London before they started the bulletin they were only selling one or two at the gates and now many bulletins later they are selling 15-20 at the gate and a number inside. At a factory in Sheffield the SW sales have increased from 15 to 20 inside and outside mainly in a month or three hours.

Those who work there should never sell at their own factory gate. When selling inside it is important to think 'to whom can we sell SW next?'. Think of the sale in ones and twos, not a mass sale which may be counterproductive. When a new sale is made it is vital that they are offered the paper regularly.

Sellers at the gate should make a point of finding out who the buyers are and what section they work and try to set up the sale from inside.'

Part 6

Building the Party

6.3 Discussion groups.

THE discussion group, whatever is composition and size, will attempt to draw together readers of Socialist Worker and SW bulletins, in order to initiate activity in support of our policies and build SWP membership and influence.

Discussion groups seek to establish a clearer and more firm political relationship between the SWP and the readers of the bulletin, to clarify with them a whole range of issues that cannot be dealt with by the Bulletin or SW. On the one hand the discussion groups are the lowest of introduction to the more formal aspects of SWP politics—and it is a good thing to establish a chair person as soon as possible—and on the other hand they are completely basic, a part of the lifeblood of the party. Many supporters, and even members, cannot and do not desire to go to meetings sell papers outside the workplace and take part in the 1001 demonstrations. In other words they are normal. While trying to urge them to take a bit of outside activity we also have to go to them and build around the existing strengths.

Discussion groups need a cutting edge. And not who is going to buy the next round of drinks. They should, like the bulletin, have a combined emphasis on political discussion and activity. The bulletin is always the minimal activity, the bread and butter, of the discussion group. It helps anchor the discussion group and in turn the discussion group will enrich the bulletin. But just as we don't have bulletins for the sake of having them we can't have discussion groups for their own sake. Combining the two is not enough in itself.

The emphasis on intervention and activity is important. It allows supporters to put to the

test some of the things we say, as well as breaking down some of the barriers that people have to raising political issues for the first time. Even when people are defeated there is often an education involved in having attempted to move a motion in one's trade union branch, and seen the attempts that may be made to block it.

There are many many examples of bulletins being based around, and developing some sort of discussion groups. It is not possible to give an exact blueprint on how and when they should operate. There is the example from a Glasgow shipyard... 'We have had a few meetings up in the canteen. And a few real successful ones. One with 18 guys coming along to it. Another couple of bummbers... one with 2 guys another with one. So it is really up and down. We did advertise them in the bulletins. The trouble was that they were held on company property so personnel and assorted managers were up in the canteen having their tea that day, and looking for masses of revolutionaries. There was quite a big meeting that day. But it was too tense and never really got going. So now we organise the meetings by approaching guys when they buy the paper and when we hand out leaflets.'

Another discussion group meets in a comrades house... up to six or seven people attend... the difference is that they meet solely to discuss the bulletin.

'What I didn't say is how I got off the ground. I got four or five people together on nightsheets, in one of the locker rooms, from different departments, who I thought might be sympathetic to putting the bulletin in. That was a laugh in itself because it was like a Colditz meeting in the middle of the night, one spying out for the management. I put forward that I was thinking of putting a bulletin in, I couldn't do it on

my own, and I explained the reasons why I thought it was necessary. There were a couple of Jamaican guys they all agreed but the general feeling was that they might be victimised was there. They would give a bit of money, give some of their ideas, but they wanted to keep their heads down to begin with. Which is what happened.'

Other groups meet in pubs, locker rooms, social clubs and so on. It is important to be flexible about times for meetings—hold them whenever people can conveniently meet, either lunchtime between shifts or whenever. It can be fantastically difficult to get people to meet together so be patient... and try to establish a regular habit, time and place, for meetings.

6.4 Workplace Branches

WORKPLACE branches are an innovation for revolutionary socialists in this country. For over a generation the revolutionary movement has had too tiny a foothold in the working class to contemplate building Party branches in the place of work. Our own experience is very limited. Workers power lies mainly in the factories, docks and all the other places of work. A revolutionary socialist organisation must be built not as a mere collection of local branches, but one that has an almighty lever at the point of production.

Three or four comrades in the workplace can be the nucleus of a new branch. Then we are in business. It is important to pay attention to the business of the practical details. Although it will probably prove difficult to have regular well attended meetings it is important to time them so that the maximum number of comrades and SW readers can participate. In planning care must be taken to avoid overloading members

with meetings—which is disastrous.

These branches cannot be built by one 'superleader'. It is important that as soon as possible the jobs are parcelled out. The four main planks of the workplace branch are 1, the bulletin 2, SW sales, 3, regular meetings and 4, collection of subs. In a revolutionary party there is no rank and file. Every member must be a leader. Hence every member must get on top of their job.

At this stage and up to the actual formation of work branch, it is important to stress the need for integration into some wider 'grouping' of the organisation — e.g. geographical branch, a local industrial fraction, education group, etc because:

- (i) The two, three, of four aren't going to get their political education from each other.
- (ii) They aren't going to enjoy the full rights of membership.
- (iii) They need to see something a bit more exciting than their own tiny group.
- (iv) The formation process does not happen overnight. There will be local problems of personal qualities and specific work situations which can make growth slow.

The timing of the move from nucleus to branch is of importance. If the move is made too quickly the risk of a setback is high. We should perhaps aim at eight members before recognition. We can be flexible. In a very small workplace—say a small drawing office—perhaps necessity dictates a smaller number, but in most places of 500 plus, why not eight—ten?

All of this throws special responsibilities onto geographical branches and District Committees to take full responsibility for assisting comrades in these situations. Perhaps districts should look at nuclei of branches, with even more care than established branches.

Part 7 Practicalities

7.1 Writing the damn things

WRITING the damn things is like learning to swim. Some study books and take lessons and learn that way. Others take the plunge, and do it that way. Above all keep it simple—write down your thoughts and arguments that you have been having—if you get stuck go out and have an argument and then try writing it down. Don't worry about spelling and grammar. Others can do that for you.

At school most of us are given a very funny picture of what a writer is. It's probably the last thing we think we could be. Don't you have to live in a garrett, and have inspiration, like steam, coming out of the top of your head?

How do you get over the inhibiting feeling, 'I could never write anything.'

The first way is by caring. The most important thing is that you have something to tell, and you want to tell it. It doesn't matter whether it's a simple news report of a meeting or a strike, or the most elaborate poem—caring is what matters.

All sorts of things will help you to get your piece written. First of all, gather together the facts. Read other articles or books. Use your library services. Ask for help if you need it. Go and talk to people who will know. Keep files of newspaper cutting on the things you are interested in.

Secondly, make your own notes. Most of us have ideas at the oddest times. Things suddenly come to you when you're about to fall asleep, or when you're standing at the sink in the middle of washing up. Get into the habit of always keeping a small notebook and a pen handy. Otherwise a good idea can go right out of your mind, never to be recovered.

It's often worth carrying a thing about in your head for a week or so.

On the other hand, until you put pen to paper, many of your ideas will not really shape up themselves.

When you do sit down to write, give yourself a chance! If you can, try to make it the time of day which suits you best, when you're most alert. Give

yourself enough time. Remove as many distractions as you can. Go to a room where you can concentrate. Get someone else to keep the kids occupied, and don't have a delicate cake in the oven!

How do you get over the inhibiting feeling, 'I could never write anything.'

MYSTERY HUTS

Have you noticed the mysterious huts that have

appeared without any consulta-

tion with the workers. They

have our own ideas what they are

used for. If you have any ideas

write them in to the bulletin.

Apparently the huts were for security guards. The snippet provided the following answer:

WILSONS BREWERY
Socialist Workers Bulletin
Production Presents

'The Story of Ali Kettel and the

40 Barrels'

WHEN YOU GO HOME at night after working in a factory do you think 'Have I been honest to my boss today? Have I pinched anything belonging to the company?' Sitting there, watching telly, you think you are living in a free democratic world. AH! BUT ARE YOU LIKE HELL.

You are only on a 16 hour parole. And why? Because your almighty gaffer is claiming that you are a thief during working hours. So what he wants to do is make your factory into a REFORMATORY. So when your conscience clears you may be able to sleep with a contented mind.

When you do sit down to write, give yourself a chance! If you can, try to make it the time of day which suits you best, when you're most alert. Give



number of words.'

If you are the only person writing, make sure you talk to people and include what they are saying and even try to make a point of including their particular phrases. Make sure the bulletin includes requests for letters and contributions. I got this letter from a bloke and it was addressed very formal, and said dear Joe. If this is no go rip it up and it was a fantastic poem and it just lifted me up in the air, and it was signed, yours sincerely, and you suddenly realise how intimidated working people are about writing.'

Make sure your bulletin includes snippets. This snippet was published in the Wilsons bulletin (16 Feb)

MYSTERY HUTS
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parole. And why? Because your almighty gaffer is claiming that you are a thief during working hours. So what he wants to do is make your factory into a REFORMATORY. So when your conscience clears you may be able to sleep with a contented mind.

When this is a look into the future but let's look at the past first:

This strict security system was introduced by Kommandant Kettel in TWO other prison camps in London (Stalag Isleworth and Auschwitz Mortlake). The infernos in those prisons being semi-armed and naive fell for this hull. As it happened they got ID cards, with their photographs taken. (I think this is in case they got lost while on parole.)

Now Kommandant Kettel, being a brute, was sent to another prison called Newton Heath Rehabilitation Centre (Sorry, Wilsons Brewery) for cruelty and to implement this security system. On arrival he consulted Herr Ober-Lieutenant Otto Haslam and ordered him to dictate these atrocities to the escape committee (made up solely of shop stewards who told Herr Haslam to get stuffed). Her Kommandant Kettel was very upset.

Looking further back into the archives we have found that Grand Met holds a big share in security systems. Come to think of it someone might be spying on me writing this article, which this is about. The chosen few will be hand picked henchmen who will inform his masters of anything that happens—like pinching one bottle of beer. So I say the future looks like being a case of dog eat dog—that is, if you are insane enough to fall for this security rubbish.

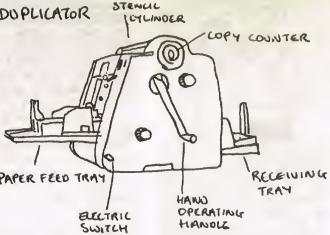
During a recent bomb scare we did not have this security. Why? Because the boss didn't give a s**t about you. He wanted his production running like hell even if you did get blown to bits in the process. Now that you are turning out his production he accuses you of pinching it. No, not all of it. The silly figure of about 40 barrels a week. How to Christ could you smuggle 40 barrels out of your pocket, carrier bag or whatever? Even Ali Baba and the 40 thieves couldn't do that.

Personally, I am considering sending that to the Guinness Book of Records. So for me and I hope you also, say balls to their security. Viva La Freedom

The Leopard

OUR NORMAN





7.3 Printing

TO DO the next step you need to know what printing method you are going to use. An ink duplicator is the most common and simplest method; your local Womens Voice Group, SWP branch or college should have access to one. Ink duplicators are normally suitable for making up to about 4000 copies from a master copy called a stencil.

7.4 The Stencil

THIS is a thin sheet with a special wax-like coating available from stationers' shops. Typing, writing or drawing on it in the correct way cuts the surface coating to allow the ink to pass through the shapes formed. The top is perforated so that it can be attached to a duplicator.

If you are going to type the stencil (or part of it) switch the typewriter ribbon off and clean the keys (with an old toothbrush) so they cut properly. Stylos pens with steel tips can be bought quite cheaply and used for writing or drawing. Or use a finely pointed biro.

Typing mistakes can easily be corrected on stencils by using correcting fluid or nail varnish. It simply restores the wax surface when you paint it on. Don't try and correct large areas like a paragraph. Start again.

As these stencils are delicate, you are fairly limited in what you can draw. So, if you want a more professional finished product you should have an electrostencil made. (Womens Voice)

7.5 The Electrostencil

ELECTROSTENCILS really make the difference in producing a more professional job,

Brightly coloured paper

creates a bigger impact than the common white paper.

7.7 Payments

QUITE simply a self financing system has to be established as soon as possible. Bulletins don't grow on trees. Money is collected in a number of different ways. Football cards are popular. Some of a whip round at the discussion meetings. Others ask the distributor to chip in with 50p. Non-readers often chip towards the costs.

7.8 Layout

HAVING decided to start a workplace bulletin many comrades fall down on an important part of the whole process—layout and production.

You can have the most profound things to say, but it's all a waste of time if the bulletin is unreadable, overly wordy, boring, cramped and/or humourless.

BETTER TO SAY LESS AND HAVE SPARE MATERIAL FOR YOUR NEXT REGULAR BULLETIN, than stuff it all in one—it just won't be read.

So, what are the basics?
(1) LAYOUT. POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Neat typing is important

- Don't cram too much on one sheet, 300 words are enough.

- Leave a single space between lines and a double space between paragraphs.

- Keep to short paragraphs and leave a gap at the top and bottom of the page. Too much close print is unreadable and boring.

- Start by making a rough copy on a sheet of paper and see what it will look like.

- Columns are much easier to read than long unbroken lines. Take a tip from the National Newspapers.

(2) CHOOSE YOUR HEADING

This can be 'scratched' on the wax stencil with a stylus. It's often a good idea to use the company logo, with the subsequent fun of having management complain to the rewards committee. Otherwise there is an incredible selection of lettraset typefaces which can be chosen. For these you will need an electrostencil. Have an electrostencil made of the heading alone, which can be used for several issues of the bulletin, as well as if you want to use a different colour.

(3) EDIT ARTICLES DOWN TO BASICS. Sometimes 3 or 4

short articles from different sections about different issues are better than one long one. Sometimes one small article will touch off discussion you never anticipated e.g. WILSON'S SW BULLETIN article on 'Mysterious Huts'.

7.9 Production:

'A MISTAKE we made in our district is that up till six months ago we had a district printing expert. Apart from the fact it was practically disaster because whenever he wasn't there nothing got done it was also a political disaster because people got to expect to be serviced. We finished up with 2 or 3 members in the district whose sole function was to do work for members and non members. So we have now totally changed things; instead of having a centralized set up, each of the branches have their own duplicator and own typewriter. It's much better. The leaflets aren't printed as well, but at least the bulletins are much more appreciated by the people who bloody well use them because they are not presented to them on a plate. It won't take long for the raw users to be producing as good products on inferior equipment... because they will be working within the material available. And lets face it, nobody cares much about a bulletin and how it finally looks as the people who write it and produce it.'

A certain amount of servicing is probably necessary. But we would argue that for every bulletin there is perhaps one or two comrades to help, and to help not with the production, but also the content and distribution. These outsiders are being trained in the politics of the workplace, while at the same time they should aim to spend a 'little bit of extra time training' one of the workplace members to do layout, and use the duplicator.

The main point is that a well-produced, easily read, short, snappy, funny bulletin will have more effect than a closely typed, political text. This doesn't mean you have to be flippant or over-humorous—for example photographs and newsprint don't reproduce well on electrostencils. Any copy with too much heavy black drives duplicator operators to distraction as the paper sticks to the ink.

But it is worth it to spend the little bit of extra time to lay out properly, and ultimately to train one of the workplace members to use the duplicator.